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ABSTRACT

As economic globalization brings with it a broader cultural hegemony, a movement has developed in the Asia-Pacific region to reaffirm the significance of local cultures, focusing on local or indigenous knowledge and its place in the modern school and higher education. Some teacher educators are exploring ways of blending local processes of knowledge analysis into their research, others are incorporating local processes of knowledge transmission and acquisition into their teaching and are encouraging their graduates to do likewise in the school classroom. At Flinders University of South Australia, a network of indigenous and nonindigenous scholars has been researching and documenting this movement. This paper reviews their studies at Australian higher education institutions and postsecondary vocational programs that serve indigenous populations, among Australian secondary students of ethnic Vietnamese background, in a large urban New Zealand school with Maori students, in South Pacific island schools and colleges, in Papua New Guinea teacher education programs and literacy campaigns, in secondary schools of indigenous Indonesian communities, and in Thai universities. Overall, the studies show that local systems of knowledge analysis and transmission share many common features, including emphasis on unity of knowledge, spiritual aspects, individual autonomy and learner control, and experiential basis. There is also strong evidence that local and global knowledge can be syncretized to create new ways of thinking and learning. Contains 41 references. (SV)

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In recent years there has been a substantial growth in the number and size of teacher education institutions and programs in developing and newly industrialised countries in the Asia-Pacific region. With the intensifying global impact of economic rationalism, these teacher education programs increasingly are being expected to concentrate on narrow, vocationally-oriented goals. They are preparing teachers who can skill children and youth for the short-term demands of the workplace. The broader socio-cultural goals of learning and scholarship are being overlooked. The superiority of the western economic world view remains largely unchallenged. Modern processes of knowledge analysis and transmission are implemented unquestioningly in the pursuit of economic modernisation. Diversity and difference are disregarded. We are at risk of becoming teacher trainers, not teacher educators.

This economic hegemony is being accompanied by the cultural artefacts and values of the industrialised and post-industrialised world, including its languages, communication networks and non-sustainable consumerism. The report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (*Learning: the treasure within*, 1996, p. 43) expresses serious concern about the impact of this broader cultural hegemony on local communities:

> The fact that a handful of countries enjoys a virtual monopoly of the cultural industries and that their products are distributed throughout the world to an ever-growing audience is a powerful factor in the erosion of cultural distinctiveness. Predictable and all too often very trivial though it may be, this spurious 'world culture' nevertheless conveys implicit value systems, and may well produce a sense of dispossession and loss of identity in those exposed to it.

Among the responses to this increasing economic and cultural domination has been a movement in some institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to reaffirm the significance of local cultures, focusing especially on the significance of local or Indigenous knowledge and wisdom and their place in the modern school and higher education institution. Some teacher educators have begun to explore ways of blending local processes of knowledge analysis into their research and

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scholarly activity, others are finding ways to incorporate local processes of knowledge transmission and acquisition into their teaching, and are encouraging their graduates to do likewise in the school classroom. The movement has been neither systematic nor coordinated. In fact, it has had a somewhat tentative quality, relying on the interests and commitment of individual staff, often working in isolation. Nevertheless there is a growing sense of urgency to rediscover and revitalise local wisdom and knowledge, thus giving teacher education programs and the schools they serve greater confidence in responding to the pressures of globalisation. Importantly, the movement does not represent a retreat to the past, nor an attempt to hold on to obsolete ideologies, but has a dynamic quality, reflecting a search for cultural continuity and distinctiveness amongst the constant adaptation and change of the modern world.

At the Flinders University of South Australia a network of scholars - both indigenous and non-indigenous - has been exploring and documenting the development of the movement in the Asia-Pacific region. Their search began in indigenous settings in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, focusing initially on primary and secondary education. The project then extended, first to local cultures in the South Pacific region, and more recently to countries in Asia, including Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, and has focused increasingly on higher education, and more specifically on teacher education. In every research setting the project has been based on the premise that scholars in local or indigenous cultures should have the rights and freedom to create their own modes of knowledge analysis and transmission out of the interaction between their own traditions and those of the modern western world. This is a dynamic process of creation and recreation as local and global systems of knowledge are reviewed, evaluated, adapted and merged. From a teacher education perspective it represents a profound remapping of teaching and learning landscapes.

While the tensions and discontinuities between the local and the global are acknowledged, they are not necessarily seen as antithetical, nor as dichotomous. Rather, this has been a search for complementarity, a search for new ways of syncretising or blending diverse cultures of knowledge to ensure the maintenance of local cultural identity while simultaneously equipping students with skills to cope with the realities of the modern world. This process of fusion cannot be imposed from the outside. While it may be legitimated and facilitated by outsiders, the primary initiative must come from within the local culture.

It is the purpose of this paper to provide an overview of the Flinders project, summarising its major outcomes and commenting on the emerging implications for scholars and planners in teacher education programs, especially in the developing world, and in Indigenous and migrant settings in developed countries. The review will deal with each research setting in turn, rather than being strictly chronological.

Indigenous Australia

Non-Indigenous Australians have had only limited appreciation of the processes of knowledge analysis and transmission of Indigenous Australian groups, and of the world views and value systems that underlie them. The pioneering work of Harris (1980) provided the first in-depth analysis. A subsequent study undertaken by Harris (1990; 1992) in association with the Flinders project, explored the educational implications of his earlier findings, advocating a theory of culture domain separation. While his theories have sparked considerable controversy, and their utility now appears limited, Harris' work has been a catalyst for a wide-ranging search by non-Indigenous Australians more fully to understand the knowledge and wisdom of the nation's first inhabitants.

The Flinders project has played an ongoing role in this search, the most recent overview of its findings (Teasdale and Teasdale, 1994) providing a useful summary of the main features of Indigenous Australian knowledge analysis and acquisition (see Table 1). It is clear from Table 1 that there are fundamental differences between Indigenous Australian and western cultures of knowledge, and that these have inevitable implications for the effective provision of higher education for Indigenous groups in Australia. As noted earlier, however, any initiative to meld elements of the two cultures of knowledge must come from the inside. And for this to happen Indigenous Australians must have ownership and control of their own education. The focus of the Flinders project therefore has shifted from cultural to political analysis, seeking to understand the implications of Indigenous self-determination for the delivery of all forms of post-secondary education, and exploring the wider issue of Indigenous rights. Two studies have been conducted.

The first, by Gale (1995; 1996), studied three higher education institutions in northern Australia, two of which cater for an exclusively Indigenous clientele, the third for a diverse population of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians. Two of the three play a central role in the preparation of teachers in northern Australia. Using a grounded theory approach, Gale conducted a series of in-depth interviews over a three-and-half year period with selected staff and students from each institution, focusing primarily on the views and approaches of non-Indigenous staff to Indigenous participation in higher education. Not surprisingly, he found the majority of academic staff adopted an equity perspective, basing their teaching on a representation of Indigenous Australians as oppressed or disadvantaged. As a consequence, they believed their role to be the teaching of western knowledge and skills necessary for Indigenous students to participate more fully in the wider society.

In contrast to the equity theme, Gale found a minority of non-Indigenous staff arguing from an Indigenous rights perspective, advocating Indigenous control of courses, curricula, resource allocation, and administrative arrangements. These staff were critical of the emphasis placed on the acquisition of western knowledge, and of the undervaluing of the knowledge that Indigenous staff and students brought to the learning environment. They supported a conception of knowledge as contextually and socially constructed, allowing for the

Table 1

Key features of Indigenous Australian knowledge analysis and acquisition[1]

Elements of Culture	Key features of knowledge analysis and acquisition	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Personal responsibility and autonomy	High autonomy; intrinsic motivation to learn	Low autonomy; extrinsic motivation to learn
Social context	Learning is person-oriented	Learning is information-oriented
Ownership of knowledge	Private; limited access; ownership gives power	Public; relatively open access; knowledge a commodity to buy and sell
View of knowledge	Emphasis on unity, wholeness and interconnectedness	Compartmentalised; quantification and analysis stressed
Time orientation	Learning from the past; preservation of stability and continuity	Learning for the future; preparation for progress and change
Explanations of existence	Interactional; co-existence with nature; preservation of meaningfulness	Transactional; manipulative; purposeful learning
Truth and belief	Tolerance for ambiguity; knowledge not questioned; curiosity discouraged	Resolution of dissonance by analysis and questioning

[1]Adapted from Teasdale and Teasdale (1994, p. 179)

incorporation of Indigenous languages, teaching methods, content and assessment criteria into the higher education curriculum.

Notwithstanding the strong commitment of some of his interviewees to an Indigenous rights perspective, there is little evidence from Gale's data that non-Indigenous staff were adopting this perspective in their day-to-day teaching practices. The concept of Indigenous rights clearly remains strongly contested in Australian higher education. As Gale (1996, p. 273) expresses it:

> ... tertiary education has developed from a mono-cultural Anglo tradition, a process which is seen to have marginalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. These forms of boundary marking and marginalisation on the basis of academic traditions are both powerful and subtle in their operation. Many of the participants, reflecting on their own personal experiences in the tertiary education arena, concluded that contemporary tertiary education is a potent form of assimilation and an ongoing process of colonisation.

The second study, by Teasdale and Teasdale (1996), reached broadly similar conclusions. It took the form of a national review of the participation of Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training. It found that most programs continue to be based on principles of equity, thus perpetuating the inequalities and injustices they are trying to overcome. There were, however, a few clear examples of programs based on an Indigenous rights perspective. Within these programs there was a recognition of prior Indigenous learning, an affirmation of Indigenous languages and cultures, and a genuine attempt to contextualise course content and delivery. Two Alice Springs based institutions were particularly notable for their efforts in this regard, the Centre for Appropriate Technology and the Institute for Aboriginal Development. The former has been particularly culturally sensitive in developing its courses. As described by Seemann and Talbot (1995, p. 774), the Centre seeks to draw on the ancient Indigenous Australian stock of techniques, knowledge and wisdom, using "... holistic learning that is responsive to community needs".

In summary, although non-Indigenous Australians may now have a much clearer understanding of the processes of knowledge analysis and transmission of Indigenous Australian groups, there is relatively little evidence that these processes are being affirmed in the delivery of post-secondary education. Genuine attempts to adopt an Indigenous rights approach are the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless the search continues in Australia for examples of Indigenous participation in the construction of new cultures of knowledge in education through a fusion of the local and the global, and for examples of their successful integration into teacher education programs.

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Students of Ethnic Vietnamese Background in Australia

Ninnes (1995a; in press) carried out a major study of senior secondary school students of ethnic Vietnamese background in Adelaide, South Australia, focusing broadly on cultural change. Using Kim and Hurh's (1993) syncretic theory of cultural adaptation as a framework, he explored the students' values, attitudes and aspirations in relation to their school learning environments. Not surprisingly, he found that students who arrived in Australia at a younger age gave greater importance to hedonistic and individualistic values, thus showing a replacement form of adaptation. Later arrivals, however, maintained many of the values of Vietnamese culture, including conformity, filial piety, commitment to the collective interests of the extended family, high educational and occupational aspirations, and a desire to preserve Vietnamese traditions, including cultural activities and religious observances. There was also a greater commitment to maintenance of the Vietnamese language.

Using Kim and Hurh's (1993) syncretic framework, Ninnes (1995a) found three forms of adaptation amongst the later arrivals. All three allowed retention and reinforcement of the local or Vietnamese culture, but varied in their response to mainstream Australian culture:

(i) "attachment" involved little or no acceptance of the dominant culture;

(ii) "addition" involved a selective acceptance of the dominant culture in particular sociocultural contexts, but no weakening or loss of local culture; and

(iii) "blending" involved greater acceptance of aspects of the dominant culture leading to a new or "hybrid" way of life, involving a synthesis type of adaptation that allowed key elements of the local culture to be retained.

These are significant findings. Ninnes' study provides clear evidence of various forms of syncretism between local and dominant cultures of knowledge and learning. It also confirms that transposed or migrant cultures are able to resist the sociocultural hegemony of modern western approaches to education. The challenge for educational institutions is to facilitate this syncretism by creating learning environments that are more sensitive to local cultures. And the challenge for teacher educators is to prepare teachers who are able to play a supportive and nurturing role in such environments.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Only a single, brief, school-based study has been undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand, following the educational reforms of 1988 which brought a new emphasis on local autonomy, collective responsibility and cross-cultural understanding between the indigenous Maori people and Pakeha (non-Maori). The study's findings, however, are particularly significant, demonstrating that Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to teaching, learning and school

management can be melded to create an entirely new ethos in an educational institution, in this case a large urban secondary school.

As described by Teasdale (1994, pp. 208-213), the local Maori culture was incorporated into all aspects of the school's operation, transforming the learning environment into one that reflected the individual autonomy and responsibility of the learners, non-hierarchical and non-competitive relationships between learners, the holistic nature of knowledge, and the use of achievement-based assessment. Tait (1995, p. 760), the school principal who implemented the transformation, believes that Maori knowledge and ways of accessing and processing it are now better provided for; that the program avoids "... locking students into or out of their own or other cultural knowledge"; that there is no sense of either culture being promoted or tacked on; and that while there is more visibility of Maori practices, there is much else that is non-Maori. The school therefore provides an exemplar of deep biculturalism in practice, demonstrating how two seemingly antithetical cultures of knowledge can achieve compatibility, and how they can be fused to create a new environment for learning.

The South Pacific Region

As in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, early work in the South Pacific was school based, beginning in the Solomon Islands with a long-term ethnographic study of the social and cultural construction of knowledge and learning (Ninnes, 1991; 1994; 1995b). The study provided a detailed description of the informal learning system used by Melanesian children, and reported on attempts to reform the secondary school curriculum in such a way that students were empowered to operate within multiple knowledge systems.

A second research study focused on the impact of educational aid on the small island nations of the South Pacific (Luteru, 1991; Luteru and Teasdale, 1993; Luteru, Ryan and Teasdale, in press). It sought to identify the effect of the imposed, globalised knowledges of two donor countries, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, on local approaches to teaching and learning. A significant mismatch was found between the cultural values and expectations of donors and recipients. At all levels of the education process - primary, secondary and higher - it was clear that aid programs were hastening the process of globalisation without due regard for local cultures of knowledge. The study concluded that, in the education sector, "... there is a clear need for projects that nurture the deep roots of the culture while enabling young people to cope realistically with the demands of westernisation" (Luteru and Teasdale, 1993, p. 304), citing local Tongan academic, Thaman (1993, p. 8):

> We in the islands need to evolve innovative theories/models of development that are firmly rooted in a genuine attempt at a synthesis of traditional and modern knowledge, skills and values, because this is the context in which development occurs ... This synthesis can only come about through appropriate education ... we ought to look for ways of developing ourselves and our resources that take our cultures into account.

Based on the outcomes of the above study; on Thaman's (1988; 1992; 1994) research into Tongan concepts of learning, knowledge and wisdom; and on a preliminary analysis of traditional Fijian wisdom (Nabobo, 1994), an attempt was made to develop a culture-sensitive teacher education course in a new institution of higher education in Fiji (Teasdale and Nabobo, 1995; Teasdale and Teasdale, in press). The study sought to enable teacher education students to re-discover and re-affirm their cultural roots. An interactive, participatory approach was used, focusing on contextualised information, oral rather than written student presentations, and a holistic approach to knowledge and wisdom. Teaching sessions allowed for formats as diverse as oratory, ceremony, dance, demonstration, debate, discussion, dialogue, performance and audio-visual presentation.

Formative and summative evaluation showed that the course had achieved quite remarkable success in blending the local and the global, both in terms of content and process. Interview and observational data suggested a considerable impact on students' sense of cultural identity, even nine months after graduation. Nevertheless, the systematic introduction of local knowledges into the institution, and of local processes of knowledge analysis and transmission, was quite strongly contested, and the flow-on effect to other courses in the institution was less extensive than anticipated (Teasdale and Teasdale, in press). The study did demonstrate, however, the feasibility of implementing broader socio-cultural goals of learning by fusing local cultures of knowledge with those of the modern world.

Papua New Guinea

Two studies have been completed in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The first, by Mel (1995; 1996), explored local knowledge systems from an 'insider' perspective, looking especially at knowledge creation and analysis, and at local processes of learning and teaching. Mel himself is from the Mogei language and cultural group in the Melpa area of the PNG highlands, and built his study on a detailed analysis of the nature of being in his own socio-cultural context. As Mel (1995) explains it, the Mogei understand the child as an individual with an inherent ability to think, to inquire, to acquire knowledge, and to interpret the world:

> In the Mogei context the process of education and learning involves the young acquiring their knowledge through listening, watching, practising and participating. ... The individual *Na* [person; entity - in a dynamic and processual sense] is the prime location for learning what is deemed necessary for the individual to create and live meaningfully (Mel, 1995, p. 691).

The actual processes of teaching and learning in Mogei culture are encapsulated in the concept of *Mbu*, which can be interpreted as 'seed' (Mel, 1996). Using the seed as a metaphor for learning, Mel perceives teaching as a process of planting and nurturing, with the learner retaining control and therefore having an influence on the length of time and the pace of learning activities. In other

words learning is not forced. The seed is not germinated and nurtured in a hot-house environment. The individuality of the *Na* is respected at all times.

Having developed a theoretical perspective for his study, Mel then went on to apply his insights in a teacher education setting, using participatory research processes. Selecting a group of final year students from the teacher education program at the Goroka Campus of the University of PNG, he collaborated with them to develop a one semester Drama course which sought to blend local cultures of knowledge and learning with the introduced western processes that were dominant in the institution:

> In the face of numerous changes, particularly with the dominance of Western influences in almost all aspects of Papua New Guinean life, the study worked with this group of students to explore and experience teaching, learning, creating knowledge and performing based on a particular local system of knowledge. In this way indigenous knowledge, wisdom and identities would be re-affirmed (Mel, 1996, p. 483).

Right from the start, the project was directed by the individual learners within the context of the group. Interrelatedness between participants was central: "People were of primary importance and knowledge was a consequence, not the other way round. ... Knowledge was not something outside of us but created from within" (Mel, 1996, pp. 491-492). Each member of the group therefore had to be fully aware of his/her own individuality, yet equally aware of the others and open to the insights and experiences they could contribute. Mel's role was to nurture and facilitate, not to act as a dispenser of knowledge.

As the project unfolded, participants came to appreciate the interconnectedness of knowledge. As Mel describes it, the ways in which knowledge was constructed by the group at times defied the conventions of structure, sequence and logical order that are so central to modern scientific processes of knowledge analysis and construction: "The project as a vehicle criss-crossed and interwove local processes and Western influences to form complex and meaningful knowledge for the participants" (Mel, 1996, p. 488).

The second PNG study was undertaken by Nagai (1996a; 1996b) in partnership with the Maiwala people in the coastal region of Milne Bay Province, near Alotau, where she had worked as a vernacular literacy consultant and trainer since 1990. Based on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, the study supported the current educational reforms in PNG by developing a new vernacular elementary school based on the local Maiwala culture and language, and by evolving appropriate methodologies for the on-site preparation of Maiwala women as teachers. The school program now has become an exemplar for implementation of the reforms elsewhere in PNG, and is well documented both in text and video. Essentially it demonstrates the sycretism of western approaches to teaching and learning with the "whole-of-life" processes of a local village community (Nagai, 1996a).

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Of particular interest here is the teacher education component of the study. Nagai chose to live in the village, staying with local families, using the vernacular for all communications, and building relationships of trust. Using the PAR approach supported by observations and informal interviews, she documented the local culture of knowledge, paying special attention to knowledge acquisition and analysis. The local women who had been selected by the community to prepare as teachers participated fully in this process as part of their on-site training. Using the data from the study they then developed curriculum content and processes for the new school in consultation with interested adults in the village. This was a dynamic process involving considerable ' trial and error' learning as they tested their ideas on a day-to-day basis in the classroom, constructing and reconstructing their methods.

As with Mel's project, one of the key themes to emerge was that of interconnectedness, both in terms of knowledge and of people. The school and its teachers were not separated from the everyday life of the community, but were an integral part of it. Learning, both for the teachers and their pupils, was experiential and meaningful. The independence of all learners was respected and nurtured. Yet many ideas and approaches were appropriated from elsewhere, especially in the teaching of vernacular literacy. There was a genuine fusion of the local and the global.

Indonesia

Indonesia is a nation of remarkable cultural and linguistic diversity. In order to build a sense of unity and cohesion the government has attempted to forge a national identity by using a common school curriculum and language of instruction. In 1989, however, it enacted a new educational law allowing significant curriculum localisation through the incorporation of some local knowledge drawn from the immediate physical, social and cultural environment of the school. This had direct implications for teachers, and for higher education institutions responsible for the preparation of teachers. As Kopong (1995, p. 640) explains it, however, implementation of the new law has encountered one significant problem:

> Having never in the past been given any opportunities to participate in curriculum planning processes, local people in many regions have not known how to respond to the law, and have found it difficult to effect any significant changes in the school curriculum.

Kopong sought to rectify this problem for his own Lamaholot people, a distinctive cultural and language group living on the islands of Adonara, Lembata and Solor, and in parts of Flores, in eastern Indonesia. The first phase of his research comprised a detailed ethnographic study of Lamaholot cultures of learning, and began by differentiating the formal learning imposed by the national curriculum from the informal learning taking place within the local community, contrasting the two forms of learning in terms of content, process and context. The outcomes of this study are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

The differences between informal and formal learning in Lamaholot culture[1]

	Informal learning	Formal learning
Content	Reproduces traditional knowledge and skills	Prescriptive curriculum designed by a central board
	Integrated and holistic	Each subject autonomous and individually taught
	Some knowledge is private	All knowledge is public
	Lacks logical analysis	Analytical ability is important
Process	Based on observation, imitation and participation	Based on lecturing and problem solving
	Uses listening, advising and trial and error learning	
	Motivation to learn is intrinsic	Motivation to learn is extrinsic
Context	Stresses values of harmony and cooperation	Stresses values of individualism and competitiveness
	Preserves cultural identity	Serves economic development
	Past and present time oriented	Future time oriented
	Seniority principle	Qualification principle
	Learner centred	Teacher centred
	Person oriented	Program centred
	Learning is part of ongoing life	Learning is decontextualised

[1]Adapted from Kopong (1995, p. 646)

In the second phase of his research Kopong explored the implications of his findings for curriculum localisation in Lamaholot upper secondary schools, suggesting approaches that would allow informal learning to be blended with the national curriculum in such a way that Lamaholot students could acquire modern western knowledge without losing their own cultural identity. From a content perspective, Kopong urged a more holistic approach within a comparative framework that allowed students to explore similarities and differences between national and local knowledge, the curriculum emphasising the dynamic nature of culture, and of cultural interaction. From a context perspective, the school should promote a sense of harmony, cooperation and unity. Kopong (1995, p. 648) also suggested that curriculum implementation be preceded by asking for the help of the ancestors in a traditional ceremony:

> The ceremony reminds all participants that the success of whatever they do is derived not only from their own efforts but also from the intervention of their ancestors. This approach depends for its effective implementation on the active collaboration of parents, teachers, students and Lamaholot elders and community leaders.

From a process perspective, Kopong advocated a combination of methods, avoiding the usual reliance on lecturing alone. In particular he suggested three innovations:

(i) The use of small group learning in the classroom, albeit avoiding mixed-gender learning groups; this approach builds on the effectiveness of peer group learning in Lamaholot societies. It is important, however, that learning tasks are clearly specified to enhance learning outcomes.

(ii) The use of simulation game strategies where students are presented with information before they act it out in different roles. This is congruent with the strategy of 'learning by advising' where a Lamaholot elder verbalises knowledge and skills before allowing students to perform or reproduce them. Kopong (1965) warns, however, that performance and feedback should be carried out within a group and not individually, thereby upholding the Lamaholot value of harmony.

(iii) The use of a 'model of reality' approach where the teacher establishes a real-life scenario followed by a lengthy period of student participation. Kopong believes this strategy fits well with the observation and imitation process in Lamaholot culture, again enabling students to learn more effectively and pervasively.

Although the second phase of his research focused on upper secondary schooling, Kopong (personal communication) believes his ethnographic data (see Table 2) to be equally relevant to Lamaholot teacher education, and that teacher educators should be setting an example of best practice. Based on his own experience as a teacher educator, he believes that Lamaholot knowledge can be syncretised successfully with national and global knowledge to create a more innovative and effective teacher education curriculum.

Thailand

As part of a research project that examined the internationalisation of knowledge and the higher education relationship between Australia and Thailand, Ma Rhea (1995; 1996) studied concepts of wisdom and knowledge in Thai society, and their place in modern Thai universities. Over 95 percent of the Thai people consider themselves Buddhist. Being Buddhist is indistinguishable from being Thai, so intertwined are Buddhist spiritual philosophies with Thai culture (Ma Rhea, 1995). Thai concepts of wisdom and knowledge therefore are deeply rooted in Buddhist tradition, and continue to influence teaching and learning in Thai universities, especially those in rural Thailand. Nevertheless, a pervasive theme emerging from Ma Rhea's (1995, p. 669) research was that Thai culture:

> ... is increasingly being overshadowed by economic imperatives, and that restoring the balance between commerce and culture requires the development of new ways of thinking that are deeply rooted in local culture while still able to operate within a global marketplace.

Ma Rhea identified several features of Thai culture deriving from Buddhist belief and practice that have been integral to the analysis and transmission of knowledge and wisdom in Thailand. They include an openness to outside ideas and to a diversity of inputs, and a capacity to adapt these ideas and inputs to the Thai context: "The Thai style is to filter everything that is learned, borrowed, bought or copied through a rich and proud cultural tradition" (Ma Rhea, 1995 p. 671). There is also a capacity to avoid conflict using indirect techniques of confrontation, thereby allowing Thais to live and learn together harmoniously. Based on her observations and interviews, however, Ma Rhea concluded that these local processes have been eclipsed by the sheer volume and force of global knowledge flooding into the country. In response to this, Ma Rhea (1995, p. 680) believes that Thailand now is entering a new phase where:

> ... local wisdom is reasserting itself and the new and the old are being moulded into a third distinctive process of transmission and analysis of knowledge. These ways of thinking absorb the new but draw on the old. ... The new form that is arising asserts that knowledge must be coupled with moral principles ... for the knowledge to be of benefit to future Thai society.

Evidence for this conclusion is drawn from several sources. At a policy level, Ma Rhea (1995) notes several recent and significant attempts to bring older Thai local and religious knowledge back into the universities by focusing more on the needs of local communities, especially at regional institutions in rural Thailand. New teaching methods are being encouraged in some universities, especially in the area of problem- or context-based learning where collaborative, group-based activities appear effective. Some academics are developing strategies for the incorporation of Buddhist transcendental knowledge and wisdom into their teaching, using an old established Thai practice of adaptive balancing. Buddhist mind-strengthening concentration practices are being used to enhance student learning. Likewise the use of meditation is being encouraged as a means to support insights gained by the analytic/scientific approach (Ma Rhea, 1996).

Especially in rural universities students are being encouraged to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities that tap into their own nation's storehouses of knowledge and wisdom.

In summary, there is evidence from Ma Rhea's study that Thai universities are achieving some success in blending traditional Thai/Buddhist approaches to knowledge analysis and acquisition with modern global approaches to produce a new and distinctive style of teaching and learning. Although the global remains forceful and pervasive, there is increasing support within Thailand for the incorporation of local knowledge and wisdom. The Office of the National Education Commission (cited by Ma Rhea, 1995, p 681), for example, stresses that the new university graduate "... must think out how to produce a well-balanced combination of modern knowledge and local wisdom for future economic and social development".

Summary and Conclusions

The Flinders project has not been systematic but reflects instead the varying interests and inclinations of its individual researchers. Some studies have been school based, others have focused on higher education, including teacher education. Some have emphasised the description and documentation of local cultures of knowledge and wisdom, others have case studied particular schools or higher education institutions, seeking to explore ways in which local and global processes of knowledge analysis and acquisition are able to be blended to create new ways of teaching, learning and knowing. Nevertheless, several conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the various studies:

(i) It is possible to develop detailed descriptions of local cultures of knowledge and wisdom. All such cultures are dynamic, and any given account therefore represents a slice of reality at only one particular moment or period in time. As the various accounts are brought together and compared, however, a pattern does begin to emerge. Our own accounts from the Flinders project supplement those from other sources in portraying an increasingly comprehensive picture (see, for example, Masemann, 1990; Lipka and Stairs, 1994; Thomas, 1994, 1997; Teasdale and Little, 1995; Osborne, 1996; Watkins and Biggs, 1996).

(ii) The picture that emerges from the Flinders project, and that is corroborated by the other sources noted above, shows that local systems of knowledge analysis and transmission share many features in common. Most have a strong emphasis on the unity or interconnectedness of knowledge. Harmony and cooperation are stressed. There is a spiritual quality present, and therefore less need for rationality, linearity and logical analysis, and correspondingly a greater tolerance for ambiguity. Knowledge acquisition is learner-centred. There is an emphasis on individual autonomy and responsibility, with the learner retaining control. Nevertheless there is a strong commitment to collective rather than individual interests. Knowledge acquisition also is experiential. Much knowledge comes by listening, watching, practising and participating.

(iii) There is also strong evidence that local knowledge and wisdom can be syncretised with the global in a dynamic process of creating and recreating new ways of thinking, knowing and learning. The local and the global are clearly not antithetical, but complementary. Several of the Flinders case studies provide clear examples, both in schools and teacher education programs, of the successful fusion of local and global cultures of knowledge. In every case, however, the impetus has come from within the local culture. Processes of fusion cannot be imposed from without.

The findings of the Flinders project open up exciting opportunities for teacher educators, especially those working in developing country settings, or with Indigenous or transposed cultures, enabling them to move beyond the narrow and confining processes of knowledge analysis and transmission of the modern industrialised world. They allow us, in other words, to accept and celebrate other categories of knowing, and to nurture these alternative realities, both in our own teaching, and in the teaching of our students. We can be teacher 'educators' in the truest sense of the word. Or, as Beare and Slaughter (1993, p. 19) express it, we can now move to a "... deliberate integration of the empirical, rational and spiritual dimensions in a more balanced 'map' of knowledge". In this way diversity, difference and discontinuity can become positive and creative forces that enable the content and processes of the teacher education curriculum to be remapped in new and exciting ways.

The Flinders project is continuing, with several studies in various stages of implementation. An international network of scholars also has been formed to exchange ideas and resources, and to collaborate in comparative research. Currently about fifteen members of the network are preparing a book of contributed chapters on the role of local or Indigenous knowledge and wisdom in higher education. Anyone interested in joining the network is invited to contact the author.

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